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ABSTRACT

A districtwide strategic planning model for school improvement is described in this summary report. Six elements of the model are described, which include the strategic planning process, belief statements, policies that stress self-esteem and dignity, a mission statement based on educational equity, objectives to achieve equity, and 12 action strategies. Program results include improved student achievement, teacher involvement, parental support, and student and staff self-esteem and performance; more independent student learning behaviors; and changes in teaching behaviors. Also included are an outline of the history of at-risk student program initiatives on a national, state, and district level. (LMI)

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Strategic Planning to Support Learning for All

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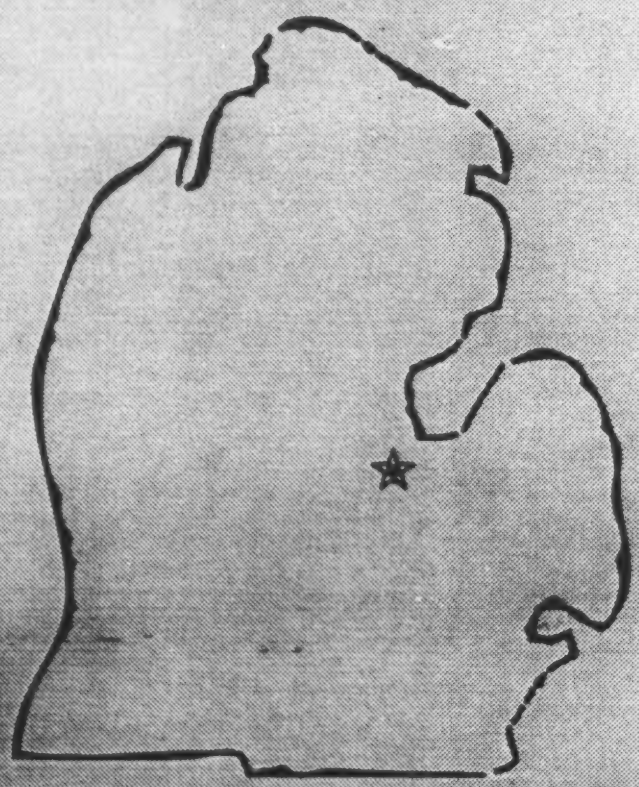

Grand Blanc Community Schools
Grand Blanc, Michigan

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Grand Blanc School District's Planning Process

The Board and Administration feel strongly about the importance of planning. Prior to the adoption of the District Strategic Plan, the district was involved in both short and long range planning.

Short Range Planning (Exhibit #1)

Short range planning was accomplished through an annual goal-setting workshop. This process involved more than 40 representatives of the staff, students, community residents, and the entire Board of Education. Each year the Board adopted five major goals accompanied by three or four objectives. These goals were budgeted for and assigned to specific administrators and/or departments with responsibility for attainment. Over the last five years of this annual goal-setting, goals that placed importance on equity and the premise that all students can learn began to emerge.

Long Range Planning

In 1984 the district formulated a five year operational plan. This plan was updated annually and included units on staffing, student enrollment projections, financial projections, facilities, etc. This plan dealt with the operation of the school district and was not visionary.

Effective Schools Movement

The school district became involved in the effective schools-school improvement process in 1986. A team of teachers and administrators was trained and a district school improvement plan was formulated. The following year each individual building began developing its own plan.

Building school improvement, especially as student test results were disaggregated, began to include components that dealt with equity and striving to ensure that all students were learning.

Strategic Planning Emerges

The Board of Education and Administration became dissatisfied with the planning methods previously mentioned. Neither the annual goal-setting process nor the operational five-year plan provided the vision necessary to foster the type of education necessary for students to be prepared to meet the challenge of the 21st century.

Also, the school improvement process did not provide a district-wide direction that could be utilized in building school improvement plans that provided parameters for planning. Thus, strategic planning was studied and decided upon as a process to provide direction for the district, at least for the subsequent five years.

The Bill Cook Strategic Planning Model

The Bill Cook and AASA's model of strategic planning was adopted by the district, and the Superintendent, and the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction were trained as facilitators. The Assistant Superintendent became the internal facilitator and the Superintendent served as a liaison between the planning process and the staff, community and Board of Education.

The Strategic Planning Process in Grand Blanc

The 25-member strategic planning team spent three days at an off-site retreat developing a mission, objectives and 12 strategies through which the mission and objectives could be attained. Throughout the retreat, one common thread that prevailed at all sessions and in all deliberations was that equity was necessary in all programs and that the belief, "All students can learn" must permeate the entire organization. This is exemplified by the following:

- **Beliefs** (Exhibit #2)
  Note that this philosophy is inherent in those beliefs that are circled.

- **Policies** (Exhibit #3)
  Note that the number one policy regarding self-esteem and dignity.

- **Mission** (Exhibit #4)
  Note the importance of equity in this statement.

- **Objectives** (Exhibit #5)
  All three objectives speak to the necessity of equity being achieved and stress the philosophy that "all students can learn."

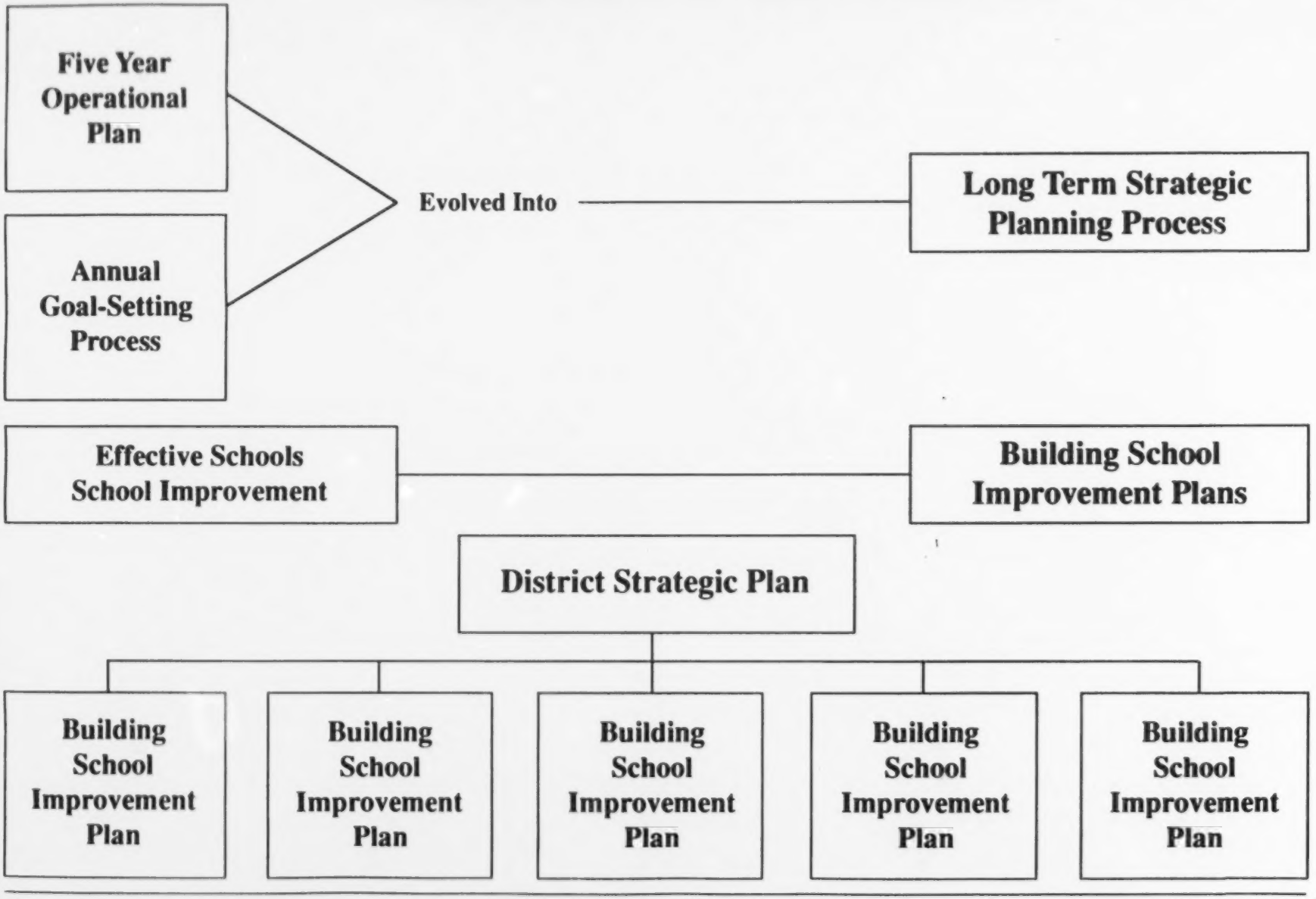
Strategies of the Plan

Twelve different strategies were developed. An action team was formed for each strategy and these teams worked over a three-month period to develop action plans to achieve each strategy.

Over 250 members of the community and the staff served on action teams. These teams submitted 122 action plan. Eighty-four action plans were approved by the strategic planning committee and 82 action plans were approved by the Board of Education, budgeted for, and are being implemented over the next five years.

Many of the action plans that were officially adopted provide the manner in which equity is to be attained and all students are to be accepted as being able to learn.

Strategic Planning Process
Grand Blanc Community Schools



Grand Blanc Community Schools
Strategic Planning
Beliefs

* We believe there is good in every person.
* We believe there is a basic right to be treated fairly, equally, and with dignity.
* We believe one's sense of self-worth affects personal achievement.
* We believe that all people are capable of learning.
* We believe that learning is essential for a productive world.
* We believe that education is a life-long process.
* We believe the development of individual responsibility is important in order to be productive.
* We believe it is important to recognize there are differences in values and perceptions of others.
* We believe that we are part of a worldwide interdependent community.
* We believe a wide variety of experiences is important to the development of a well-rounded person.
* We believe there are basic skills which are necessary to function independently in our society.
* We believe critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making are essential life skills.
* We believe that change is inevitable, on going, and occurring at an accelerating rate, thereby necessitating continual personal and organizational adjustment.

Beliefs Continued

* **We believe that achievement by an individual ororganization is best assured when measurable goals are established and pursued.**

* **We believe the total community shares the responsibility to provide for the well-being of individual citizens and individual citizens share a responsibility for the well-being of the community.**

* **We believe that people are entitled to live, learn and work in safe, orderly and supportive environment.**

* **We believe a home life committed to family values encourages success.**

POLICIES

- We will not tolerate behavior that demeans an individual's self-esteem or dignity.
- We will not practice or tolerate any form of discrimination.
- We will not implement any program that does not conform to our strategic plan.
- We will not add programs to an already crowded school day without deleting old programs to make room for the new.
- We will not add programs without providing adequate training to the staff expected to implement them.
- We will not adopt new programs which cannot show a favorable cost-benefit ratio.

OUR MISSION

Grand Blanc Community Schools, as an innovative leader in providing quality and equitable education, will develop individuals to their highest potential for living in a changing world.

OBJECTIVES

1. *Grand Blanc Community Schools will decrease its drop-out rate by 50% by June, 1995.*

2. *By 1995, overall district student academic achievement as measured by a comprehensive series of tests, will improve by 20%.*

3. *Each Grand Blanc student's perception of self-worth shall increase a minimum of 10% per year, through 1995, as measured by a validated self-worth evaluation instrument.*

Strategies Become Action Plans

In the strategic planning process the participants from the school and community have an opportunity to propose many diverse ideas. Not all of them capture the hearts and minds of the other committee members, but some represent a commonly held interest and a consensus develops easily.

One issue which did attract such attention was the use of grouping practices which are so prevalent in our schools. The sorting, classifying, labeling and tracking of children received much discussion. This occurred because one teacher on the committee kept asking if these "traditions" of our schools were really in the best interest of all children.

Eventually this very diverse committee of 25 individuals agreed they should establish a strategy to examine this issue of grouping. That one individual can galvanize a group so more of our precious time and energy will be spent on a particular issue was reinforced.

As stated by Dr. Fultz 250 volunteers from throughout the community and staff aligned themselves with one of these 12 strategies (Exhibit #6). They met from January through April writing plans which would turn these broad ideas into specific actions to be taken by the district.

For Strategy 3, Examine Grouping Practices, a very diverse committee comprised of teachers from regular and special education classrooms as well as parents of exceptional children from both ends of the learning spectrum argued vehemently the pro and con. The outcomes of those deliberations are the focus of our presentation today.

Strategies:

Strategy 1

Provide quality education which is equitable in its outcomes for all students including those at-risk due to social or economic situations.

Strategy 2

Redefine essential skills to include critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making and design programs to promote their development.

Strategy 3

Examine for their effectiveness current "grouping" practices such as special education, ability grouping, remedial programs and alternative education.

Strategy 4

Ensure the best use of facilities for meeting changing enrollment patterns.

Strategy 5

Address the needs of the changing family as it affects schooling for children.

Strategy 6

Develop, coordinate and maintain a comprehensive testing program.

Strategy 7

Recruit the most qualified employees to reflect the composition of the present student body.

Strategy 8

Provide staff development to better prepare each employee to contribute to a changing world.

Strategy 9

Infuse technology throughout the curriculum as a means of coping with the knowledge explosion.

Strategy 10

Develop a program that will expose all students to a foreign language.

Strategy 11

We will increase Grand Blanc School employees' recognition of the need for change, increase their understanding of the Strategic Plan and create incentives to promote change.

Strategy 12

Review the need for funds and design ways for obtaining them through school-business partnerships and millage elections.

History of Least Restrictive Programs for At Risk Children

National and State of Michigan Perspective

1975 - Passage of Federal-State Legislation on Integrated Programs for the Handicapped

1983 - Additional At Risk Students Integrated into Grand Blanc Schools

* Hearing, Physically and Significantly Mentally Impaired Students

1984 - A Nation At Risk

* Research on Effective Practice Begins

1986 - Development of Michigan State Board of Education Policy on Elementary Education.

* Recommends Developmentally Appropriate Practices

1988 - Models of Inclusive Schools begin to surface throughout the Nation and State of Michigan.

Grand Blanc Community Schools
History of Implementation of At Risk Effective Programs for Students

1984 - **Implementation of Team Teaching at Grand Blanc High School.**
* Inclusion of All Handicapped Students in Regular Education.

1985 - **Study of Cultural Environmental Impacts on Children At Risk.**
* Begin to Limit Special Education Certification as a Response to All Students Having Difficulties in School.

1988 - **School Improvement Process and Effective Schools Research put into practice.**
* Heterogeneous Grouping
* Collaborative Teaching Practices

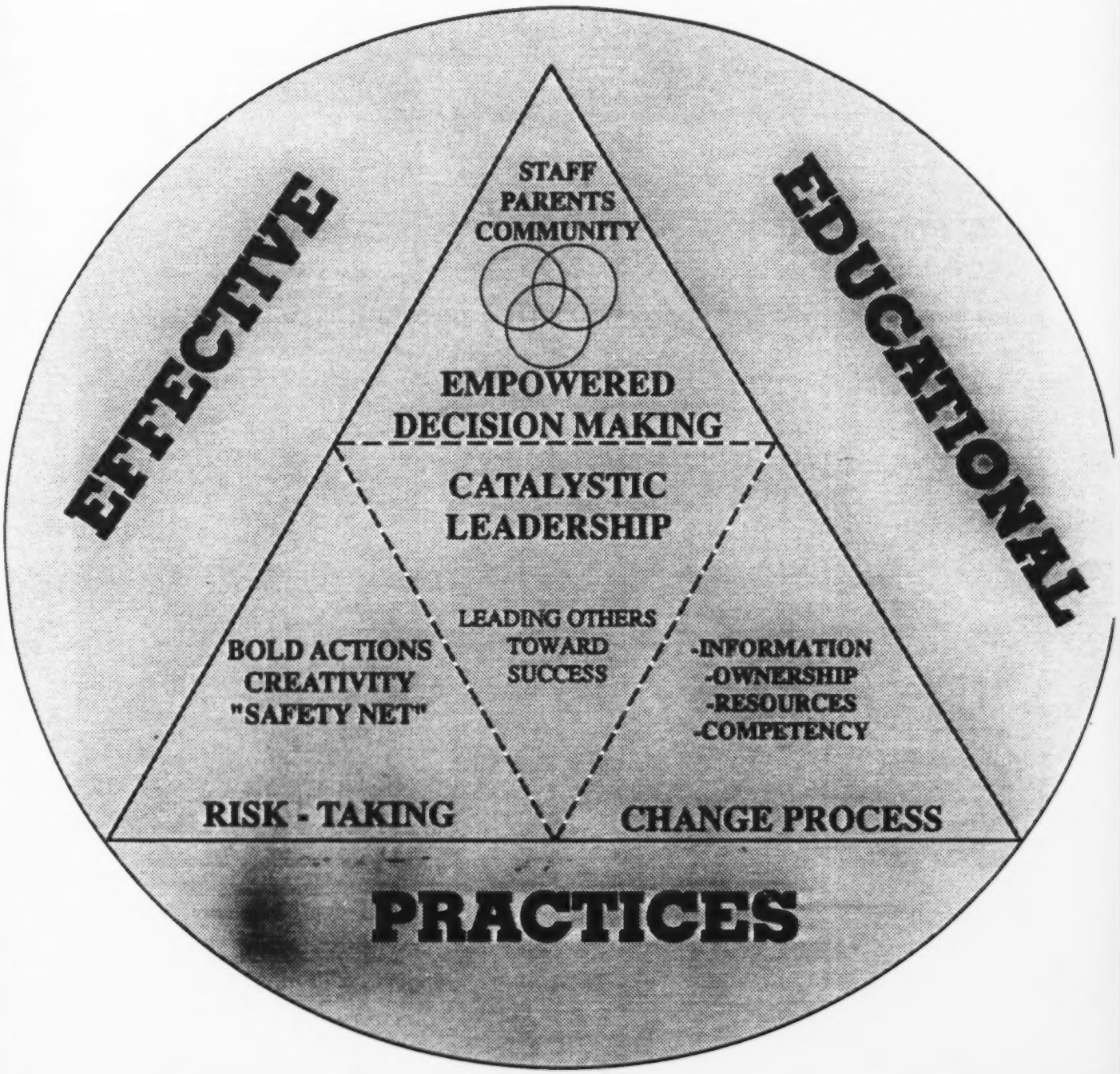
1988 (Spring) - **Vista 2000 Task Force Examines Support Services for Elementary Students Paradigm**
* Forces Risk Taking
* Inclusion
* Empowerment
* Collaboration

1988 (Fall) - **Implementation of Vista 2000 classrooms - Elementary**
* Variety of Inclusive Models Implemented

1989 - **Whole Group Reading Instruction Practice Implemented in All Elementaries**

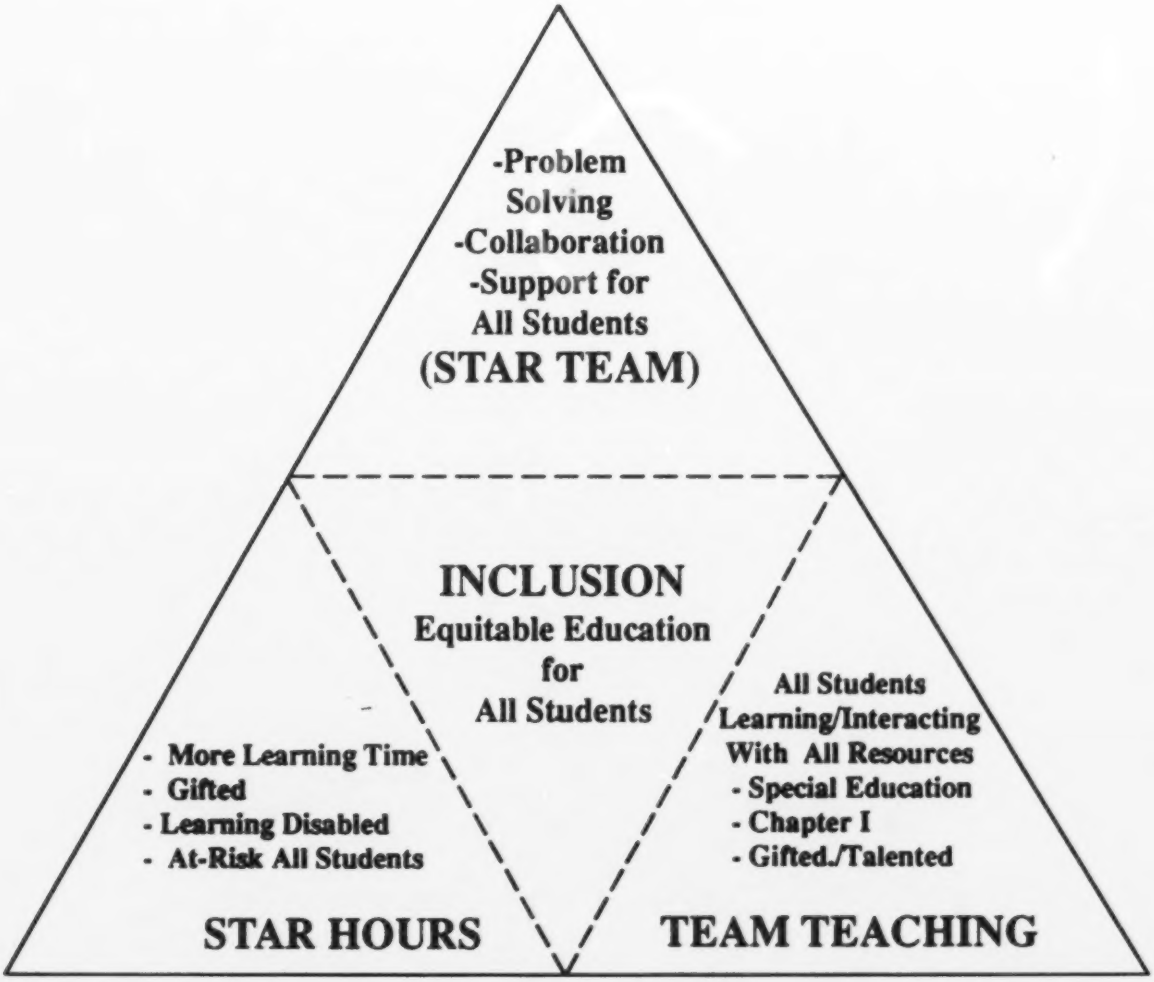
1990 - **Begin Strategic Planning**

1990-1991 - **Implement Inclusive Practices and Empowered Decision Making Process.**
* District-Wide Elementary Delivery Models - Inclusion
* Support Team for At Risk Students (STAR) Begun In All Schools
* Empowerment Site-Base


EFFECTIVE
EDUCATIONAL
STAFF
PARENTS
COMMUNITY
EMPOWERED
DECISION MAKING
CATALYSTIC
LEADERSHIP
LEADING OTHERS
TOWARD
SUCCESS
BOLD ACTIONS
CREATIVITY
"SAFETY NET"
-INFORMATION
-OWNERSHIP
-RESOURCES
-COMPETENCY
RISK - TAKING
CHANGE PROCESS
PRACTICES

Grand Blanc Community Schools

"<u>All</u> resources for <u>all</u> students <u>all</u> of the time"



RESULTS:

- **Decreased Discipline Referrals**

- **Increased Student Achievement at Grade Level**
  - **1st Grade Reading**
  - **Inclusive Students**

- **Increased Teacher Involvement with All Students**

- **Increased Parental Support**
  - **96% Attendance Rate for Star Hour**
  - **95% Approval Rating of Current Offering**

- **No Formal Pull-Outs**

? *How:* ?

- **Resources**
- **Collaboration/Team Building**
- **Planning**
- **Staff Development**
- **"Pace"/Timing**
- **Competency Check**

OUTCOMES

Student	Staff
- Increased Academic Achievement	- Self-Esteem
- Increased Self-Esteem	- Competency
- Increased Independent Learning Behaviors	- Control
	- Changed Teaching Behaviors